

Message Text

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43

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4008

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: CHINA AND INDOCHINA

SUMMARY: WHILE DOWNPLAYING ITS OVER-ALL IMPORTANCE, CHINA HAS BLASTED THE STEPPED-UP US MILITARY AID TO CAMBODIA AND HAS DESPATCHED ITS FIRST PURELY MILITARY DELEGATION TO VIETNAM SINCE 1961, MOVES WHICH SUGGEST A PRAGMATIC PEKING EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS IN INDOCHINA WITHOUT FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERING ITS LOW POSTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CHINA'S FIRST HIGH-LEVEL PUBLIC COMMENT ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA, VICE PREMIER CHI TENG-JUEI CHARACTERIZED THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AS "EXCELLENT" AND THEN BLASTED THE STEPPED-UP US AID TO THE LON NOL GOVERN-
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MENT. AT A MARCH 1 BANQUET HONORING GRUNK SPECIAL ADVISER

IENG SARY, WHO RECENTLY VISITED HANOI, THE PRC VICE-PREMIER TERMED INCREASED US ASSISTANCE "AN ACT OF AGGRESSION" AND CALLED FOR THE "US GOVERNMENT TO IMMEDIATELY STOP ALL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO THE LON NOL TRAITOROUS CLIQUE, AND LET THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE SETTLE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM THE OUTSIDE." HOWEVER, THE FORCE OF THE PRC BLAST IS MITIGATED BY CHI'S DOWNPLAYING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCREASED US AID TO THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT. HE AGAIN PORTRAYED THE US EFFORT AS THE SAME AS GIVING A BLOOD TRANSFUSION TO A POLITICAL MUMMY IN HOPES OF PROLONGING LIFE. CAUTIOUSLY AND IMPLICITLY DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT, CHI ASSERTED CHINA'S "RESOLUTE SUPPORT FOR THE JUST STAND" OF THE GRUNK IN THE CONTEXT OF "THE SETTling OF THE QUESTION OF CAMBODIA." COMING ON THE HEELS OF NEWS REPORTS OF CHOU'S TALKS WITH SIHANOUK (PEKING 325) THIS VERBAL ATTACK ON THE US SEEMS MORE OF A TACTICAL MOVE BY THE PRC TO GIVE SUBSTANCE TO CHI'S PROFESSIONS OF CHINA'S "POWERFUL BACKING FOR THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE," RATHER THAN ANY EXPRESSION OF FUNDAMENTAL CONCERN WITH THE TREND OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA.

2. WITH REGARD TO VIETNAM, PEKING ON FEBRUARY 28 DESPATCHED ITS FIRST SOLELY MILITARY DELEGATION TO VIETNAM SINCE 1961. THE FRIENDSHIP DELEGATION, VISITING HANOI IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION FROM THE DRVN MINISTER OF DEFENSE, IS HEADED BY YANG YUNG. (YANG, A CPC CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER AND COMMANDER OF SINKIANG MILITARY REGION, HAS HAD A CLOSE MILITARY ASSOCIATION WITH TENG HSIAO-PING.) AT A HANOI BANQUET HONORING THE GROUP, YANG RESPONDED TO HIS HOSTS' PRAISE OF CHINA'S "SINCERE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE" BY CITING THE "NEW STAGE IN VIETNAM," PRAISING THE VIETNAMESE FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR, AND REFERRING TO THE CLOSE TIES BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES AND ARMIES. WE SURMISE THAT THE PURPOSES OF THE MILITARY DELEGATION INCLUDE ENHANCING PEKING'S POSITION IN THE HANOI-PEKING-MOSCOW RELATIONSHIP AND SMOOTHING OF RUFFLED FEATHERS CONCERNING CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR THE EFFORT IN THE SOUTH. (UNLIKE MOSCOW THE PRC DID NOT SEND A MILITARY DELEGATION TO THE DECEMBER 22, 1974, 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF DRVN'S ARMY DAY IN HANOI.)

3. THE SLIGHT SHARPENING OF PRC FOCUS ON INDOCHINA WHEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEEN AGAINST A BACKDROP OF STEPPED-UP INSURGENT THRUSTS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FORCES IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, AND GRUMBLINGS AND CRITICISM REGARDING PRC SUPPORT FOR THE INDOCHINA STRUGGLE OFFERS LITTLE SIGN OF ANY BASIC CHANGE IN PRC POLICIES OR POSITION. ON THE CONTRARY, PEKING'S SLIGHTLY HIGHER POSTURE SUGGESTS A PRAGMATIC CHINA MOVING TO SUSTAIN AND MAINTAIN ITS INFLUENCE IN INDOCHINA IN PARALLEL WITH THE SEEMINGLY GROWING POWER AND INFLUENCE OF ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS.

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